Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 16 Number 6 June 2019

With effect from June 2019, we plan to conduct two field trips every month. Details for June are given below:

FIELD TRIP - 1: Sunday, 16th June 2019: Himayat Sagar Lake. Meeting point: Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 6.15AM. Coordinator: Bharadwaj Korni (Mobile: 9949095660)

Himayat Sagar has always been a popular birding site, with birders usually getting a good cross-section of birds on the lake as well as the surrounding areas. This would be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast.

FIELD TRIP - 2: Sunday, 30th June 2019: Ananthagiri Hills. Meeting point: Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 6.15AM. Coordinator: Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 9738840070)

Besides being a pleasant woodland walk, Ananthagiri has always been very productive from the birding viewpoint, and is a paradise for forest birds. One can see Flycatchers, White-eyes, Chloropsis, Orange-headed Thrush, Nightjars, among others. The Indian Pitta and the Brown Fish Owl have been reported earlier. This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast.

For both the trips, we will be car-pooling, so please let the coordinator know if you need a ride, and also if you can accommodate any others in your vehicle. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. Our new T-Shirts and Caps will be available for sale; T-Shirts are Rs. 450/- each and Caps are Rs. 250/-. Also, as always, please avoid plastic carry bags and containers.

NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITEE ELECTED

The Annual General Body Meeting of Deccan Birders was held on Saturday, 27 April 2019, at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad, Hyderabad. A new Executive Committee was elected, consisting of the following members:

JVD Moorty	-	President
K Bharadwaj	-	Vice-President
Sagarika Melkote	-	Vice-President
A Surekha	-	Secretary
Dr Krishna Nagarajan	-	Treasurer
Umesh Mani	-	Member
A Vinay Kumar	-	Member
Sudhir Moorti	-	Member
Srikanth Bhamidipati	-	Member
Gowthama Poludasu	-	Member

We would like to place on record our thanks to the outgoing Committee.

Trip Report – Ananthagiri Hills, March 17, 2019

Dr Jayati Mitra

The group during the trip (Photo: Satish Grama)

If we look around Hyderabad, we cannot help but notice the rapid development of concrete jungles all around us. However, there is one place nearby where one can always go to unwind and relax in the lap of nature and that is none other than Ananthagiri Hills near Vikarabad. March is the season when return migration takes place and very often the sighting of species of birds at their temporary destinations, makes it an interesting period for birding. We eagerly looked forward to this trip as Ananthagiri is a forest which, most of the time, throws up some surprises for birders.

Common Myna (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

As we approached our destination, the distant verdant hills slowly came into our view. The sky was clear and the sun shone brightly. A few of us quickly had a glimpse around the ancient temple till all of us finally gathered at the gate to enter inside the forest. Spring was in the air. The huge mango tree at the entrance bore tiny raw mangoes which were gently swaying in the cool morning breeze. A White-bellied Drongo was the first bird to show up in front of the gate along with a flock of Small Minivets, all hopping on the nearby banyan tree.

White-bellied Drongo (Photo: Dr Jayati Mitra)

The main show began after we entered the forest. There was no noise initially except for the trampling of dry leaves under our feet, but suddenly the surroundings became vibrant with a riot of colours as a Golden Oriole pair moved around, calling sweetly amidst a flock of chattering Rose-ringed Parakeets. A pair of Grey Hornbills flew across piping loudly. We decided to stand quietly beneath the old intertwined *ficus* trees and watch the drama unfold.

Rose-ringed Parakeet
(Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

White-browed Fantail (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Slowly one by one the birds appeared amidst the dense foliage. We could see a White-browed Fantail unfurling its tail feathers, the Common Iora whistling, and an Indian Treepie quietly moving around, puzzling us with multiple calls sounding like many different birds till we actually sighted it.

Asian Paradise-flycatcher (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

But the highlight of the moment was the beautiful black-crested white bird we always long to see, the Asian Paradise-flycatcher. I watched intently as it fed. It glided smoothly down upon the prey with closed wings almost vertically, with its long, white streamers floating behind and pointed upwards. In no time it caught the insect and rose straight upwards and perched at the same spot again. It repeated this activity multiple times.

Ashy Drongo (Photo: Satish Grama)

Ashy Prinia (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

Meanwhile another bird on the ground distracted me as it glanced furtively with its black, beady eyes. It was a Brown-breasted Flycatcher, flying and feeding restlessly on the ground.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

What followed next was the most memorable observation of the day for me. A small blue bird with orange underbelly appeared momentarily behind the huge trunk of an old tree. It seemed like a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher from behind but, just to be sure, I stood in silence, waiting for it to reappear – and was rewarded for my patience. The bird came into clear view for a short while but that was enough to observe it. Its white supercilium gave away its identity as a bird rarely seen in this area – the Indian Blue Robin!

Indian Blue Robin (Photo: Dr Jayati Mitra)

In my excitement I looked for other people around me but they all had moved away to some other spot. I searched for it again and during that period saw quite a few more birds, a beautiful pair of Tickell's Blue Flycatchers, a Blue-capped Rock Thrush, and an Olive-backed Pipit quietly feeding on the ground. But I could not find the Blue Robin again.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Olive-backed Pipit (Photo: Dr Jayati Mitra)

I quickly increased my pace and walked forward along the winding trail to catch up with the other birders and on my way, I saw an Orange-headed Thrush hidden among the leaves of a tree. I heard the sweet whistling calls of the Oriental Magpie Robin.

Oriental Magpie Robin (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

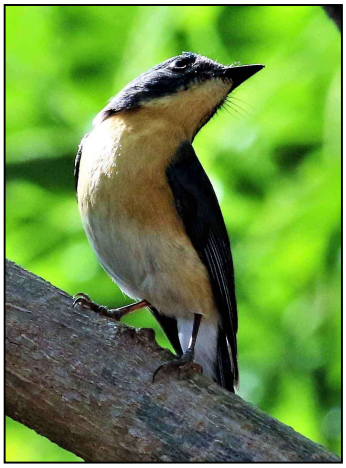
Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

A noisy group of Jungle Babblers were moving amidst the dried leaves on the ground. The forest was dry and most of the trees had shed their leaves but at the end of this path stood a majestic rain tree spreading its green canopy, dotted with dainty pink blossoms like an umbrella.

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (Photo: Satish Grama)

My friend Anjali waved excitedly towards me but despite rushing down I still missed the sight of the Yellow-crowned Woodpecker feeding on the orange-red blossoms of an Indian Coral tree. I had to remain satisfied by just looking at the brilliant pictures clicked by my lucky friends.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)



Ultramarine Flycatcher
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

But at the same time there was a rewarding sight of an Indian Nightjar which was resting higher up on a branch seemingly unaware of our presence. This bird is not commonly seen in crowded urban areas and we were indeed lucky to have sighted it.

Indian Nightjar (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Purple Sunbird (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

After spending some time, we started walking towards the gate but enjoyed birding all the way back. A pair of Blue-faced Malkohas were chasing each other and a few of us were engrossed in watching them.

Blue-faced Malkoha
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Soon everyone started moving towards a huge tree near the gate. The matter became very clear as I reached the place. Our friend Srikanth stood there pointing upwards. A Brown Fish Owl perched on its upper branch was dozing with its face turned in the opposite direction. Even after making a lot of effort, we could not get a view from the front. Nevertheless, we were very happy at the sight of this majestic bird of prey.

Brown Fish Owl
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Red-vented Bulbul (Photo: Prabhu Patruni)

Our trips always end with a special breakfast and this one was no exception. We relaxed and ate to our heart's content. And as we bade farewell to Ananthagiri, we sighted a Plum-headed Parakeet.

Plum-headed Parakeet
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

The complete list of birds sighted is given below:

Species name	Species name	Species name
White-bellied Drongo	White-browed Fantail	Indian Nightjar
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Purple Sunbird	Indian Golden Oriole
Indian Grey Hornbill	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Blue-faced Malkoha
Oriental Magpie Robin	Jungle Babbler	Brown Fish Owl
Rufous Treepie	Red-vented Bulbul	Black Drongo
Asian Paradise-flycatcher	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
Brown-breasted Flycatcher	Common Myna	Ashy Prinia
Olive-backed Pipit	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	Oriental White-eye
Small Minivet	Indian Blue Robin	Common Tailorbird
Orange-headed Thrush	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Plum-headed Parakeet
Common Iora	Blue-capped Rock Thrush	

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BIRDING THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW PEAKS
Trip Report – Munsiyari et al, Uttarakhand, November 26 - December 1, 2018

Text and Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri

Himalayan peaks during sunset

Our trip to Munsiyari and other nearby areas was a long-awaited one. Jayati and I flew to Delhi, and then reached Kathgodam by train early on November 26, 2018. Our driver Mandeep came with flowers to welcome us.

November 26, 2018: Kathgodam to Chakori

We started for Chakori well before sunrise. Around 6:30AM, the sun peeped out from behind the hills and the sky started becoming reddish. In around 15 minutes, the sun came out and threw red colour like *sindoor* on the hills. It was so beautiful, and I immersed myself in the beauty of the sunrise.

Getting a move on, we drove through Dharampuri, from where the rear view of Chakori could be seen. Clouds kissed the hill tops, and a river flowed between two hills. The roads were generally made by cutting the hill sides, but sometimes, the hills were connected with a bridge. I was enjoying the natural beauty as if some spectacular show of canvas paintings by nature was going on in front of my eyes.

A flock of birds against the sky

Around 8:30AM, a Steppe Eagle opened up our book for birding. We came out of the vehicle to take some pictures and relax for a while. After some time, dense fog covered everything between the hills, and it like an ocean of pure white waves.

Steppe Eagle

Soon, we were crossing Nainital, where houses of different colours looked like match boxes stacked together on the hill. A Blue Whistling Thrush was whistling, and a Plumbeous Water Redstart, a Cinereous Tit and a Russet Sparrow were busy with their morning activities. An Alexandrine Parakeet was nesting on a nearby tree. But I felt sad because the surroundings were full of plastic bags and sachets.

Blue Whistling Thrush

Alexandrine Parakeet

Plumbeous Water Redstart and Cinereous Tit

The car was moving through an oak forest. As the fog cleared, the snow-clad peaks glistened in the sunshine, appearing just like molten silver. Nanda Devi, Trishul, Panchachuli – all the snow-covered peaks gave us their magnificent views.

View of Nanda Devi peaks from the guest house

Kalij Pheasant

A male Kalij Pheasant was feeding on the side of the road. A White-crested Laughingthrush was sitting on a branch, and a Himalayan Bulbul was resting on a wire. We found a Rufous-breasted Accentor perfectly camouflaged in the surroundings.

Himalayan Bulbul

Rufous-breasted Accentor

A flock of Yuhinas

The hilly road sometimes seemed to be ending in the gorge but in reality it was not. Driving the turning roads, we reached Patal Bhubaneswar Temple at 2:30pm. *En route* to the temple, we saw a flock of Yuhinas chirping on a tree. Mandeep informed us that the deodar cedars were used to make fibre for garments. During the walk, we came across Yellow-billed Magpie, Oriental Turtle Dove, European Goldfinch and Streaked Laughingthrush.

The main temple was inside a cave. The entrance of the cave was so narrow that it was very difficult for even one person to move into the cave. One had to crawl into the cave by sitting on the stairs!

Around 4:00PM we started for Chakori. A Spotted Forktail was quenching its thirst at a roadside puddle, and the setting sun was beautiful. We reached Chakori (2010m above sea level) just before 6:00PM. KMVN cottage no. 002, allotted to us, was made of wooden planks, and jute curtains were hanging from the window.

November 27, 2018: Chakori to Munsiyari

We were ready bright and early in the morning, and by around 6:30AM, were out of our cottage to see the beauty of the sunrise. The sun's rays were falling on the snow peaks and scattering light as if calling everybody to wake up. The sun was just like a golden dish coming out on the sky. Everything was bathed in the morning sun's rays.

Black-headed Jay

Common Hoopoe

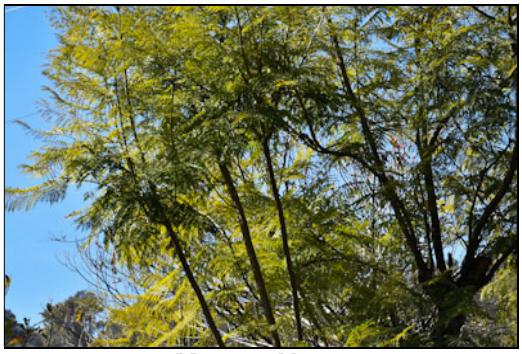
After taking it in for a while, we started trekking nearby. A flock of Common Mynas were together on a flight. Black-headed Jay, Common Hoopoe, Red-billed Blue Magpie, a Woodpecker and Barn Swallows were active. A monkey was cuddling her young one in her lap. Chestnut fruits looked like spherical thorny flowers.

Barn Swallow

Monkey with young one

After breakfast around 9:30AM, we climbed the observatory to see the 360-degree views. Then it was time to say good bye to Chakori. After checking out we started our journey to Munsiyari by 11:00AM.

Jungle Babbler



Mayurpankh tree

Mandeep stopped the car to show us the *mayurpankh* tree, whose leaves looked like peacock feathers. He also told us about the Ram bamboo, where the middle part was used for getting fibre to make garments. A Streaked Laughingthrush was calling.

Streaked Laughingthrush

Long-tailed Shrike, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Yellow-billed Blue Magpie and a Grey-headed Woodpecker were busy with their morning activities.

Slaty-headed Parakeet

Red-billed Blue Magpie

Grey-headed Woodpecker

Pine flowers used for making fibre for clothing

Our car was going through the pine forest, alongside the Ramganga river. We stopped and entered the river bed of the Ramganga. The riverbed was full of rocks of different sizes, and we collected some small stones from the riverbed. Around 2:00PM, we started again for Birthi falls, and reached there by 3:00PM. It looked like a white chiffon cloth was hanging from the hill top.

Himalayan Mountain Lizard

We saw many different kinds of mountain lizards there. At 3:45PM we started off again for Munsiyari. *En route*, we saw many mountain goats, full of fur, climbing up the hill. By 5:30PM, we reached Munsiyari guest house.

Mountain goats

November 28, 2018:

Panchachuli peaks

Tharpachuli peak in Nepal seen from Uttarakhand

We started off for birding around 7:00AM. We wanted to explore the nearby area for birding. We saw some *Butiya* dogs, which had thick fur to combat the cold. We trekked inside the Swatantrata Sangram Senani Shahid Trilok Singh Pankti, from where we could see Panchchouli snow peaks. There was also a helipad on a hill.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

A Grasshopper species

Coming back to the KMVN guest house by 9:00AM, we had breakfast, then visited the shop in the KMVN guest house, called Mati Tana Bana Samagri, which was selling handmade garments and Himalayan spices from village Sarmoli, Munsiyari.

European Goldfinch

We then started off for birding at Nanda Devi temple, and reached there by 10:00AM. A big flock of beautiful European Goldfinches were chirping. There was no crowd at the temple, which was surrounded by mountains. The chirping of birds attracted us to the front of the temple premises. Trekking out to the hill, we spotted many small birds, all busy with their morning activities – Variegated Laughingthrush, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, and some warblers among them.

Variegated Laughingthrush

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler

Western Crowned Warbler

Trekking to Maheswar Kund:

Around 11:30AM we left for our next destination – Maheswar Kund. We reached there by 1:30PM and started to trek to reach the *kund*. It was a muddy place, with very less water. When we reached, people who had come earlier left the site, so there was no human disturbance.

We relaxed for a while and took in the fresh air near a small waterfall, when suddenly we saw a Spotted Forktail, which was moving around actively and feeding. After a while it flew to sit on a nearby tree, and disappeared from there. We enjoyed sitting in the lap of nature, listening only to the chirping of birds, the sound of the cool breeze and the waterfalls nearby.

Spotted Forktail

After some time, we heard a bird call, and saw that the Forktail was calling from near the same tree. Soon it entered into the *kund* again; we had never thought that we could see a Forktail from so close. The beautiful Forktail, with its white and black combination of colours, made our day.

On our way down, we stopped near the Nanda Devi temple again, and saw a Redstart moving beside the road.

We got back to our guest house around 4:30PM, and saw that everybody had gathered around to get a view of the spectacular sunset on the majestic snow peaks. The sun was about to set and playing with colours in the snow peaks. I could not believe my eyes – it was the best sunset I have ever seen! Every second, the mountains were changing colours, just like sarees of different colours, and during that time, the clouds were also in party dresses. It was unbelievable, amazing and beautiful, and we were very lucky to see it.

Sunset

November 29, 2018: Trekking to Khuliya Top

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch

We started with a pair of Yellow-breasted Greenfinches outside our guest house. We got breakfast packed from the guest house, and reached Khuliya Top base at 7:50AM with our guide Gopal. Some horses were climbing up the hill with luggage. We started on the trail road - 6km up and 6km down!

It was a sunny day. I was the slowest person among the three. The Panchachuli snow peaks were glowing with the sun's rays like pure gold. We saw several birds and kept moving in a slow but steady pace. At some places, the snow covered our trail path. Finally we reached the restaurant around 12 noon where we had our breakfast. There we observed that some crows were moving around with eggs in their mouths.

After taking some rest, we started climbing again. While climbing, Gopal showed me the hues of the sun – it was so beautiful. The sun acted like a prism – all the colours were coming out from the white rays of sun. We came across lots of snow, and Gopal showed us rhododendron trees of different coloured flowers – blue, pink, purple. It was not flowering season, but I painted those trees in my mind with different coloured flowers. Gopal pointed out *Bhoj patra* trees also. The bark of the tree was used for writing in ancient India. The white bark was shining in the sunlight.

Large-billed Crow

We reached Khuliya Top at 2:15PM. There were lots of Large-billed Crows. An open area was totally covered with snow. I was looking for the Himalayan Monal but unfortunately could not find any. We spent some time playing in the snow. With the 360-degree view, we saw several ranges of mountains and snow peaks as if we were at the level of Panchachuli and other snow peaks.

On the way down, we picked up the wrappers, sachets and plastic that we saw on our trail road, and educated Gopal so that he, being the guide, could educate visitors not to throw those at the Himalayas.

By the time we got back around 5:10PM, the sun was setting and the snow peaks were glowing with red light. Then it became darker and darker as the time passes by. Some animal was making a sound and there was no light to see the trail road, and we were quite scared! We used our mobile torches and kept walking. I was thinking that I might fall from the hill; it was very difficult getting down. Finally I could move a little faster by holding Gopal's hand. At last we reached the base of Khuliya Top, where Mandeep was waiting, and returned to KMVN guest house.

November 30, 2018: Munsiyari to Kausani

Kausani was not originally in our plan, but I thought we could cover Kausani for a day and then move the next day to Jageswar. We started our day with a Shrike, and also saw a Jackal crossing the road. A Grey Wagtail and a Redstart caught my eye.

Jackal

Grey Wagtail

White-capped Water Redstart

We started for Kausani at 9:45AM and reached Kalamuni temple at 10:10AM. After a quick *darshan* of Kali Mata, we started off within ten minutes. The hairpin bends *en route* were beautiful. We passed through some villages where we saw step farming, and some orange trees full of oranges. We crossed Birthi falls by 11:00AM, and Mandeep pointed out a road on the hill across the valley, and informed us that we had to cross the Kosi river to reach there. We crossed the river by 2:20PM and headed towards Bageswar.

Step farming

Tree full of oranges

View of Kosi River

We stopped at a sweet shop where I wanted to taste *singari,* made of *palkhoya (kheer)* wrapped in a cone made of Molu leaf. We also purchased the famous *baal mithai*, with chocolate covered with sugar globules. We then started off again around 3:00PM for the Baijanath Temple, a 13th century temple located about 22km away. The Baijanath temple structure was like the Jageswar temple. After visiting the Ganesh temple, we went to visit the famous Ardhanariswar Temple. The beautifully carved statue of Ardhanariswar (God in the form of Half male and half female) was worth seeing. At the rear of the temple, there was a small water body where we saw lots of kites on a nearby tree.

We returned by 4:30PM, and went to the silk handloom unit, where we observed how they prepared woollen materials on the handloom. We could see a tea garden up the hill, but as the sun was already setting, we did not climb to the tea garden. We left there by 5:00PM, stopped for a while at Anasakti Ashram, where Gandhiji spent a few days, and named the place 'the Switzerland of India', and then reached our destination, the Kausani guest house around 6:00PM.

It was dark outside, but we were very happy to see snow peaks from our cottage. It was so cold outside that we requested them to serve our dinner in the cottage itself. The cottage did not even have a fan, indicating that it was never required.

December 1, 2018: Kausani to Jageswar

Great Barbet

As usual, we were ready for morning birding before 7:00AM. Snow peaks were getting up from sleep. We came down and went inside the Rajakiya Inter College, Kausani on the trail road. While walking on the road, I noticed a Great Barbet. Later on, inside the college trail, we saw a flock of Barbets and Woodpeckers. A beautiful Thrush attracted our eyes.

Scaly-bellied Woodpecker

We came back to the guest house, had breakfast, checked out and started for Jageswar by 10:00AM. Along the way, the green paddy field next to the Countrywide Public School, Someswar, Almora looked like the mountain dressed in a green saree. This part of our trip was devoted to temple visits and some shopping. We reached the Jageswar temple complex by 12:45PM. There were so many temples together in the temple premises. The oldest temple was named Maha Mritunjay Mandir; after visiting that we went into the Jageswar Jyotirlinga Temple. After *pooja* and *abhishek*, we went to the Archaeological Museum which was just beside the Jageswar Temple. It was a very beautiful museum.

We stopped at the Chitai Golu Devta (God for Justice) Temple at 2:30PM for darshan. The temple was full of bells of different sizes. For the first time, I saw a temple having papers with wishes written by devotees, hanging with the bells.

By 3:45PM we left for our next destination. Within 5 minutes Mandeep stopped to show the ancient Panthashala (tourist rest room) beside the road. Soon we reached a place where we could pick up *pahari pishai namak* ('hill crusted salt') which we could sprinkle on salads. We visited the Uttarakhand Textile Development Corporation shopping centre, where they had several interesting items – mosquito-repellent bed sheets made of *bichuya* tree, shirts made of bamboo and *devdar* tree fibre, *rajai* with fur, silk saree and scarves made from banana fiber, etc.

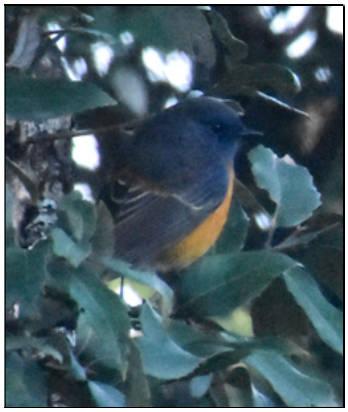
With that, our trip came to an end. We started by 6:40PM for Kathgodam, reached by 8:00PM, and boarded our train to Delhi at 8:40PM, and then took the flight back from Delhi to Hyderabad the next day.

Some other photos taken during the trip:

Black-throated Tit

Brown Dipper

Dense fog looking like a river



Blue-fronted Redstart

Villagers carrying wood for cooking

Long-tailed Shrike

White Hedge Blue

Grey Bushchat

Indian Tortoiseshell

Grey-hooded Warbler

Common Kestrel

Dandelion species

Grasshopper species

House Sparrow

A view of Nainital

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Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

PEANUTS
By Charles M. Schulz
WOODSTOCK IS LUCKY..WHEN HE GETS TIRED OF WALKING, HE CAN JUST FLY FOR A WHILE..
BONK!
MAYBE WALKING IS SAFER...
BONK!

(From The Times of India, December 1, 2017)

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photo: Umesh Mani

White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

White-rumped Shama (Maredumilli, June 1, 2019)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Copsychus*
Species: *C. malabaricus*
Size: 23-28 cm

Description & distribution: The White-rumped Shama was originally classified under the Turdidae family of thrushes and was known as the White-rumped Shama Thrush or simply the Shama Thrush. It is seen in the forested tracts across India (including Andamans), Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The male has a white rump, a long, graduated dark tail with white sides, and is glossy blue-black on the upperparts and rufous-orange on the underparts and breast, while the female is duller and has brownish-grey upperparts. The juvenile has orange-buff spotting on the upperparts and an orange-buff throat and breast with fine scaling.

There are several races described. The race found in Western Ghats and southern India is the nominate, whereas north India has *C. m. indicus*. In *C. m. leggei* of Sri Lanka, the female is similar to the nominate male. The Andaman race, *C. m. albiventris*, is now considered a separate species, the Andaman Shama; the male is similar to the nominate male but with a white belly, while the female is also similar but with a shorter tail and less glossy upperparts and throat. Besides these, there is race *C. m. interpositus* from southwestern Asia-China to Myanmar, Thailand and the Mergui Archipelago; *C. m. minor* from Southern China; *C. m. mallopercnus* in the Malay peninsula; *C. m. tricolor* in the Sumatra, Java, Banka, Belitung and Karimata islands; *C. m. mirabilis* from the Sunda Strait, *C. m. melanurus* from northwestern Sumatra; *C. m. opisthopelus*, *javanus*, *omissus*, *ochroptilus*, *abbotti*, *eumesus*, *suavis* (Borneo); the other island races are *C. m. nigricauda*, *stricklandii* and *barbouri*. Of these, the last two are sometimes clubbed under *C. stricklandii* and regarded as a separate species, the White-crowned Shama.

Habitat & behaviour: The White-rumped Shama is generally seen in singly or occasionally in pairs, in dry-deciduous or moist-deciduous secondary forest, hilly bamboo forest and forested foothills, where it shows a preference for shady ravines. It is very similar to the Oriental Magpie Robin, which it replaces in these forests, except for the fact that it is more shy and usually avoids human habitation. It is prized as a cage bird due to its mellifluous song, which is loud, clear and rich in musical quality. It feeds mainly on insects picked off the ground or from bushes or under leaves.

Nesting: The White-rumped Shama breeds mainly between April and June, although breeding has been known to take place any time between January and September. The nest is usually a shallow cup in a natural hollow in a tree, or in the tangled base of a bamboo clump, and built with roots, bamboo leaves, grass, ferns and stems. Incubation is done by the female, though feeding duties are handled by both parents. The usual clutch consists of 4-5 eggs, white to light aqua in colour, with variable brown blotches.

Local name: The White-rumped Shama is known as *'Shama'* in Hindi and Bengali, '*Shyama'* in Sanskrit, Marathi and Gujarati, *'Poda nalanchi'* or *'Tonka nalanchi'* in Telugu, *'Solai padi'* in Tamil and '*Shyamakkili*' in Malayalam.

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